

Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 11, 2008

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Peter Jessop at 6:10 p.m. in the Town Room of Town Hall

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Liv Baker, Denise Barberet, Louis Greenbaum, Peter Jessop, Chair, Vladimir Morales (left at 8:25), Vince O'Connor, Vice Chair (arrived approx 6:30), Mary Streeter, Clerk

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Stan Ziomek

STAFF / OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller, David Ziomek, Director of Conservation and Planning, Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director, Jim Wald, Historical Commission Chair, Roy Rosenblatt, Director of Community Services, Jerry Guidera, Hills House LLC, Carol Gray, Sonia Sofield, Town Meeting members, others

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Financial review
- Proposal presentations
 - 6:30 Conservation Commission
 - 6:50 Amherst Historic Commission
 - 7:10 Affordable Housing
- Discuss proposals and funding
- Discuss Letter to Town Meeting and other housekeeping items
- Review minutes
- Set agenda for next meeting
- Adjourn

Proposal presentations

6:30 Conservation Commission
6:50 Amherst Historic Commission
7:10 Affordable Housing

DISCUSSION

Financial Status

Peter discussed the current financial picture using the handouts. We have paid \$750 dues to the CPA Coalition from Administrative funds. The Olympia Drive proposal has been reduced to \$150,000. Dave Ziomek said there was a mitigation agreement as part of the negotiations for the Kimball House project. \$50,000 was set aside in the Open Space Reserves account but never allocated. The Cherewatti family chipped in \$25,000, CPA voted \$50,000 - negotiations were on-going during Town Meeting. The Commonwealth is waiting for \$50,000 in payment. We'll have a \$50,000 debit toward an APR. Mary asked in future APR's whether this \$50,000 will count toward our 20% or the State's 80% match. Dave Ziomek said we'll have a \$50,000 debit toward an APR. It will come back to us. Peter said at the end of FY08 there's minus \$8000 - it's an accounting adjustment. We have \$346,000 coming in from the State - that's probably a good number. We still have \$50,000 in Open Space reserve to use for the mitigation agreement. Peter said the total of requests in proposals is \$849,982. We have to make annual payments for the Plum Brook soccer fields and the Kimball House. Mary asked about money allocated in the past for signs. Peter said these are relatively small amounts and we should not consider these amounts yet.

Proposal presentations

Peter expressed concern about the amount of information we are getting at the last minute.

Open Space

Dave Ziomek said the Conservation Commission brings 4 recommendations. He stressed the importance of appraisals which usually cost from \$5,000 to \$10,000. They are required for all APRs now. Before the CPA law Amherst had a Conservation budget for appraisals. He is requesting \$20,000 for appraisals.

The Conservation Commission recommends 2 land projects:

1. The Tietjen APR on South East St. - Tietjens owned this land since the 1960's. We'd like to conserve this land in perpetuity. We would be adding this block to other protected land in the Lawrence Swamp area. The eastern part is forested wetland. Going through it is a trail. We're looking to APR half and acquire the other half.
2. The Nielsen property is probably not of value as an APR. We believe the threat is high because a development has been proposed on this property. Conservation Commission recommended \$35,000 and \$2500 to be matched by South Amherst Conservation Association for an appraisal. Carol Gray said it might make more sense to bring this before the Fall Town Meeting.

Vince said Nielsen's property is 7.42 acres and there's a house. He asked whether this property would be more likely to get a Self Help Grant or an Urban Self Help grant. Dave said we can apply for multiple grants in each category each calendar year. A member of the public said, "We have a lake at the moment. There's going to be a real problem if you're going to build on this land." Peter suggested those comments be directed to the Planning Board or ZBA. Carol Gray suggested funding part this year and part next year. Vince said what we spend this year may affect other projects. All the amounts are really in flux.

Dave Ziomek said there are at least 15-20 potential projects coming up. Some have more resource values, some less. We've made a strong commitment to these areas - North East Street area, Lawrence Swamp, and the Holyoke Range.

Historic Preservation

Peter said that the current request is \$328,000 rather than the \$398,000 we've seen in the recent past. Jim Wald said the Historical Commission met last night and this is what is proposed. They think the Main Street project is urgent. When something is endangered they try to preserve it. The Hills and Dickinson mansions and Sweetser Park are in a really unique area. These houses were made to be seen. Next to them were factories that weren't preserved. The original plan was \$400,000 for 2 lots. The key question is Lot 1. CPAC encouraged the Commission to seek additional funding. They did. He said Mr. Tucker said you apply for a grant and if you do not get it, the deal is off the table. They realize Lot 1 is most important and want to purchase that no matter what. Vince said we only borrow when we get notified by the State that we got the grant. Jim Wald said we get historic restrictions.

Jonathan Tucker said Amherst's share is 30%. \$125,000 is 30% of total cost of \$400,000. Vince said if the grant doesn't come through, the Town purchases a single lot. Denise asked if they're applying for \$405,000 minus \$125,000 from CPA for \$200,000 and a \$280,000 authorization for borrowing. Jim Wald said the State would pay back the latter. Peter said we don't have an appraisal yet. Jonathan Tucker said this is happening very quickly - this is likely to sell for \$200,000 for each lot according to the Town Assessor. Vince said he asked Mr. Tucker to provide us this in writing. Mary said each lot was assessed at a full fair market value of \$128,000. Vince commented that one official action by the Town Assessor values it at \$128,000 and an unofficial action values it at \$200,000. Peter said this is best left to an appraiser. Jonathan Tucker said we will have an appraisal prior to Town Meeting. Denise said the 2 lots are .28 of an acre each. Jonathan Tucker said there's a 2-year mortgage on this property and there are other houses that might go on this. The Town has to work back from timelines for grants and Town Meeting. The owners have their own priorities. Jonathan Tucker said the Chapin-Ward House, the Spring Street House and the Tuttle House are the 3 houses that would be there by the time we get to Town Meeting.

Jerry Guidera said he's the property owner and developer. He needs to develop the lots in order to pay back the loan. Estimate of \$200,000 each for lots 1 and 2 if not acquired by the Town. If the Town doesn't buy, he will develop both lots 1 and 2.

Denise asked if the Urban Self Help Grant is only for acquiring the land. Jonathan Tucker said now it's acquisition but in the future the Town will develop it as a park. Mary asked what the Historic District designation does and how it is different from these deed restrictions. Jonathan Tucker said Federal and State law does enable owners to receive tax credits if renovations are done according to historic guidelines.

Vince suggested there should be pretty strong restrictions on lot 3. He said on the 25th we must have a very clear understanding of historic restrictions on the deed. Peter said we have to be concerned with how the taxpayers' money is spent. Jonathan Tucker said we should hear about the grant by early October. Jerry Guidera said that was news to him. He had hoped for a purchase in July. Liv asked if there was any chance of obtaining private funds. Jonathan Tucker said fundraising for the West Cemetery mural took a long time. He said the Historical Commission could embark on private fundraising. Mary said leaving the front lots open would increase the value for the Hills House and it would seem to be in the owner's interest to do that.

Peter asked whether the Women's Club Carriage House property could be subdivided. Jonathan Tucker said that property was received from Alice Maude Hills and it is in perpetuity. It's a private organization. Jonathan Tucker said in exchange for \$8,800, an appropriate deed restriction will be sought and we can continue discussion of preservation of property. If it comes before Town Meeting in the future, we could have a larger deed restriction.

Peter asked whether the archiving of documents was a continuation of work previously funded. Jonathan Tucker said it is a multi-year project. Now they want to preserve materials that are on nitrate-based films and put them on DVDs.

Affordable Housing Preservation 8:26 pm

Peter said there is a proposal for \$30,000 for Habitat for Humanity for the Stanley Street/South East Street homes. There is one new homeowner living there now paying property taxes. Roy Rosenblatt said there is an affordable housing request of \$150,000 for pre-development activities (Olympia Drive) such as getting a comprehensive permit and design work. He estimates that the project may cost approximately \$1.2 million and they are asking for 1%. Vince was concerned that the builder not put more units on the space than would normally be allowed under zoning. Peter said he wants to make sure that if we allocate the money, that something will get built. They expect to talk with developers who work for "for profit" and "not for profit" organizations. He suggested there be a meeting soon with Vince O'Connor, Roy Rosenblatt, Donna Crabtree, Larry Shaffer, and Housing Partnership Committee to talk through how to make this happen.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 pm - Voted unanimously.

Next Committee Meeting Dates:

Town Room, second floor 6:00 PM

Tuesday, March 25, 2008

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

- Agenda
- FY09 CPA Historic Preservation Projects 3/11/08, 3 pages
- Hills Historic Landscape Park Acquisition - CPA FY09 3/11/08, 5 pages
- Map Dickinson National Historic Register District, 1 page
- Emails dated 3/11/08 from Michael A. Hanke and Larry Shaffer + 2 color photos of the Henry Hills mansion, 4 pages
- Follow-up to Housing Question from Roy Rosenblatt 3/7/08, 1 page
- FY2009 Proposals Recommended by CPAC 3/10/08, 1 page
- Financial Status for CPAC Funds, 1 page
- Proposed Fiscal Year 2009 Community Preservation Budget, 2 pages
- CPAC Report to Annual Town Meeting 2007, 7 pages
- Hills Historic Landscape Park Acquisition - CPA FY09 with current and historic maps 3/11/08, 10 pages
- Emails dated 2/15/08 from Jonathan Tucker and David Burgess concerning value of Main Street lots, 1 page
- Letter to CPAC 3/11/08 from Carol Gray, South Amherst Conservation Association Re: South East Street Land Acquisition Project and Public Access on Old Farm Road, 3 pages
- Letter to CPAC 3/11/08 from David Ziomek, Conservation Commission's Funding Recommendations, 2 pages

Respectfully Submitted by: Mary Streeter, Clerk

Minutes Approved: November 20, 2008